

**Remarks of the Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Ranking Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs
Hearing: “Nuclear Cooperation with the United Arab Emirates:
Review of the Proposed U.S.-UAE Agreement”
July 8, 2009**

Let me begin my remarks by stating my strong support for closer ties between the U.S. and the United Arab Emirates.

In recent years, U.S.-UAE political, economic, and security ties have significantly expanded.

The UAE is becoming an important partner in the Persian Gulf, and I support expanding that relationship.

I say this to put in context my concerns about moving this proposed nuclear cooperation agreement at this time.

For many years, the UAE has been the principal conduit of goods and materials intended for Iran’s nuclear program, as well as for its ballistic missile and advanced conventional weapons systems.

In addition, banks and other enterprises in the UAE have facilitated Iran’s acquisition of these items and its support of violent Islamist extremist organizations, such as Hezbollah.

The government of the UAE turned a blind eye to this trade for many years, even after UN Security Council sanctions were imposed on Iran.

These and other transactions were also subject to U.S. sanctions that were ignored, a fact that we must remember in our consideration of this nuclear cooperation agreement.

Similarly, al-Qaeda and other groups freely utilized UAE-based financial networks to facilitate their anti-U.S. efforts by taking full advantage of the absence of effective anti-money laundering laws, and of the cooperation of UAE citizens and others eager to profit from these activities.

To its credit, the UAE has taken steps in the last two years to combat money-laundering and terrorist financing, has participated in exercises of the Proliferation Security Initiative, and has adopted a number of laws and regulations to strengthen its export controls.

Many of us have supported a number of other U.S. efforts to acknowledge this progress and encourage the UAE to continue. However, a nuclear cooperation agreement at this point—with just about 2 years as a reference-- is one line some of us are not prepared to cross.

Despite repeated claims by officials in this Administration and, last year, by the Bush Administration, that the necessary laws and regulations are already in force in the UAE, the truth is that they are still incomplete.

I had written to President Bush about these concerns and I have also written to President Obama. I am an equal opportunity worrier. These regulations have yet to be fully implemented; sufficient personnel have not been hired and trained; and a range of other measures are waiting to be put into effect.

Specifically on the nuclear front, some nuclear laws and regulations are yet to be fully implemented.

But even if all of the promised reforms were already in place, there simply is no track record to determine if they are in fact adequate to the task—particularly in light of the UAE’s long history of complicity or negligence regarding trade with Iran and other countries of concern.

For that reason, and along with my colleagues Mr. Royce, Mr. Sherman, Mr. Markey, Mr. Fortenberry, Mr. Burton, Mr. Boozman, and Mr. Wilson, I have introduced H.R. 364.

This bill requires the President to certify that the UAE has met a number of conditions before this nuclear cooperation agreement can go into effect.

These conditions include:

- the UAE’s full compliance with international sanctions against Iran,
- its crackdown on the use of its territory by its own or foreign individuals and enterprises engaged in illicit trade with Iran or assisting Tehran’s financing of terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, and
- the application of all U.S. laws and executive orders regarding trade with Iran.

These are hardly onerous conditions.

Nevertheless, both the Administration and the UAE argue against requiring these standards because they say that the UAE has already met them.

If this is, in fact, the case, why is the Administration opposed to this legislation?

My colleagues and I have written a letter to Secretary Clinton on the conditions in the bill and, Undersecretary Tauscher, I would ask your assistance in ensuring it reaches the Secretary. I handed the letter to you this morning.

The agreement with the UAE also has consequences that go beyond the UAE itself, especially its potential to undermine nonproliferation efforts.

As you are aware, there is no sharp dividing line between the facilities, materials, technology, and expertise used for peaceful purposes, such as generating electricity, and those used in weapons programs.

Iran and North Korea, among others, have demonstrated that the inspections and controls we rely on to prevent this diversion have too many holes to provide the degree of protection needed to stop this deadly threat.

And yet, the Obama Administration, as did the Bush Administration last year, is set on using the UAE agreement as a “template” for new agreements with other countries in the Middle East, the most volatile region in the world.

This nuclearization of the Middle East by the U.S. and other countries such as France and Russia is an extremely dangerous development.

How can this be reconciled with stated commitments to prevent the proliferation of such deadly unconventional weapons?

I have a number of other concerns regarding this agreement, which I look forward to discussing with you following your testimony.